



MARCH 2003 NEWSLETTER

The Voice and Vision for VAPT

Editor: Bill Carr (Virginia Beach)



A Message from Our President

A recent editorial in the Richmond Times Dispatch, "Snow makes morons of many" caught my attention. The writer states, "When the temperature drops and the snow falls, so does the intelligence of Richmond drivers." I suspect those who read this, who are from outside the Richmond area, can attest to this same phenomena in their area.

During my drive to the office on the days when schools were closed, I was dismayed by the reckless disregard for basic driving principles exhibited by many of the drivers on the roadways. I use the word "dismayed" instead of "appalled" or "shocked" because I am not surprised by these driving behaviors.

Also, I would not be surprised if many of these same drivers are among those who call the schools to ask "what imbecile decided to open schools today?" or, "who in the world would not let schools out early when the first flake fell?" It is chilling to me to hear a parent say, "I'll drive my child before I let them get on the school bus in this kind of weather."

Transportation directors and supervisors have done a commendable job of collaborating with officials from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), law enforcement, neighboring school divisions, county or city governments, and others to provide good information to the superintendent who must make a decision about the closing or opening of schools. It is not an easy task, but it can be made easier if there is a plan.

Our school bus drivers deliver the students safely. Even if minor mishaps do occur, the students are much safer in the school bus than any other vehicle. Seventy-nine percent of Virginia's public school students ride to school in yellow school buses. Since 1940, 15 students have been fatally injured in school buses in Virginia. These are 15 deaths we wish had never happened. However, the *Annual Report Card* reveals that last year alone about 20 school-aged children were killed in Virginia in passenger vehicles during regular, weekday school hours. The last year a child was fatally injured in a school bus in Virginia was in 1994.

So, leave the driving to the professional school bus drivers in the school buses... the record speaks for itself. The administrators will deal with the question, "if schools are opening two hours late, what time will my bus arrive at the stop?" Perhaps the editorial writer did have a point; "when the temperature drops and the snow falls..."

MIKE PUCKETT, Russell County, shared the following article written by Wayne Quesenberry/staff published in the November 12, 2002 edition of the local newspaper, Enterprise.



Wythe County's driver, Dewey Fisher, became a Wythe County school bus driver in May 1952 and is in now in his 51st year as a school bus driver, setting a record for the local school system. His first bus was #2, a 48-passenger 1945 Ford. His first new school bus was #41, a 1955 Ford. Dewey learned to drive when he was 10 years old, driving a tractor and an old truck on his parent's farm in the Speedwell area of Wythe County. He's had two minor scrapes in his 50 years of driving a school bus. One involved a large truck crowding the bus on a narrow road and their mirrors scraped. Dewey has also completed a dream he had of being a police officer. He worked for the Wytheville Police Department in 1978 and retired in 1995 as a sergeant. In his spare time he raises cattle and he and his son Dewey, Jr. restore antique tractors and enter them in tractor pulls. His 3-and-a-half-year old grandson Jacob Fisher is also interested in old tractors. He and his wife, Glenthia, own Glenny's Kitchen in Speedwell. Dewey says he has seen lots of changes in the 50 years he has been driving school buses. Traffic has increased, radios are now on buses, the school buses last longer, there are more ladies driving school buses and more parents are transporting their children to school. Happy 50th Driving Anniversary, Dewey! We all thank you for your dedication and contribution to a safe pupil transportation service.



Name the VAPT Newsletter



Please email the editor, Bill Carr, at bcarr@vbcps.k12.va.us with your choice of the following names. Check off the names you like best and the name receiving the most votes will be the title of our VAPT Newsletter.

☐ Voice and Vision for VAPT, ☐ Virginia Crossings, ☐ Virginia Reel,
☐ Virginia Crier, ☐ Virginia Transporter, ☐ Virginia School Bus Driver,
☐ Virginia Vision, ☐ Virginia Reflections, ☐ Virginia Pathways,

___ Virginia Mileposts, ___ Virginia Signposts, ___ Along the Way,
___ Virginia Byways, ___ Transportation Safety & News,
___ Pupil Transportation News, ___ Virginia Busing, ___ Virginia School Bus News,
___ Stops on the Route, ___ Keep 'um Rolling

Sharon Utley, VAPT Chairperson



Sharon is Chesterfield County's Supervisor of School Bus Safety and Training. She has one daughter named Sarah and one grandson, Jeffrey. She has been working in Transportation for 17 years, first as a school bus driver then a receptionist and now a supervisor. Sharon was born in Germany while her father was in the military. They returned to Germany when she was 13 and lived there for three years and during that time toured all of Europe. She was 17 when she and her family moved to Richmond. Though not a native Virginian she calls Virginia home. Sharon says she feels very fortunate to have the job she has and work with such a nice group of people.

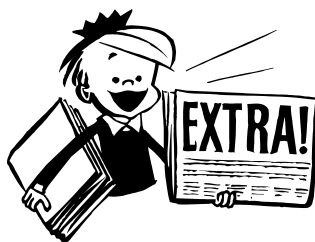
REPORT FROM REGION 3



Our meeting was held at the Richmond Country School Bus Garage, courtesy of Reuben Bryant. We discussed school bus fires, problems with Freightliner buses and cracked springs. The majority of the meeting was devoted to Headstart. A representative from the Northern Neck Office discussed the consequences of the final rule for Headstart and our budgets for next year. The consensus for all of Region 3, it doesn't look good for Headstart. We had ten people in attendance, including June Eanes from DOE. Our next meeting will be held in April.

Michael Ashby

Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation Website
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Finance/VAPT/index.htm>



NEWS from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

Do Not Block Emergency Exits – A Federal Regulation

- How often have you driven behind a school bus and seen objects in the aisle at the rear emergency exit door?
- What about the school activity trips for sports teams and bands? Have you ever seen their equipment piled in the aisles or in seats next to emergency exit windows?
- Until now, there has not been anything in Federal regulations that directly addressed the issue of maintaining access to emergency exits. Many states have laws or regulations on the subject of blocking emergency exits on school buses.
- Hopefully, **the new Federal regulation** will stop the placement of various items in front of, or next to, emergency exits.

Multifunction School Activity Bus – NASDPTS Comments

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to create a new vehicle category – a Multifunction School Activity Bus (MFSAB).
- The State Directors Association provided extensive comments to the questions and issues raised in the NPRM. Specifically, the association strongly disagreed with NHTSA that the MFSAB should be limited to school buses with a gross vehicle weight rating of 15,000 pounds or less.
- The State Directors Association believes limiting the MFSAB category to buses with a GVWR of 15,000 pounds or less, would hinder, rather than encourage, efforts to coordinate transportation activities.
- A copy of the association's comments, as well as the NPRM and all other comments to the docket, can be viewed at <http://dms.dot.gov>. The docket number is NHTSA-2002-13704

New Federal Law Says “No” to Lap Belts

- On December 4, 2002, President George W. Bush signed “Anton’s Law,” a child passenger safety measure sponsored by U.S. Senator Peter G. Fitzgerald (R-ILL).

- Anton's Law reflects the previously announced actions of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to initiate rulemaking to require lap/shoulder belts at all designated seating positions in small school buses.
- The pupil transportation industry looks forward to any and all Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that result from Anton's Law and/or any other NHTSA initiatives.
- A full copy of Anton's Law can be read on the State Directors Association's website – www.nasdpts.org.

2003 Virginia Special Needs School Bus Road-e-o



The Virginia Special Needs Team Safety School Bus Road-e-o has been organized again this year to provide an opportunity to improve special needs driver and assistant training, while having a little fun in the process. Although the road-e-o is a competitive event, the primary purpose is learning.

Contestants will be allowed to compete in the road-e-o as either driver-attendant teams OR as driver individuals. Teams or individuals will be evaluated the same.

The 2003 Virginia Special Needs Team Safety School Bus Road-e-o will feature the following events:

- **Written Test.** The written test will be sent to registered contestants ahead of time and is "open book." Whether taking the test as a team or as an individual, contestants are encouraged to "research" test questions by going to their supervisor, trainer, school special needs staff or other resources within the community.
- **Recheck.** This is conducted on a lift-equipped school bus and all special needs items (lift operation, securement straps, fire blanket, set cutter, etc.) must be checked.
- **Wheelchair loading and securement.** This event focuses on critically important wheelchair loading and securement procedures, including the "little things" that sometimes get overlooked but can easily lead to a student injury. Contestants will load and secure a wheelchair with a student on board, and are judged on items such as involvement with wheelchair while it is on the lift, setting wheelchair brakes on the lift, sensitivity towards the student, checking for head clearance before moving the wheelchair and student through the lift door, selection of proper securement points on the wheelchair, adequate tightening of wheelchair securement straps; checking for securement; etc.

- Driving Test. The driving course is roughly based on the traditional road-e-o driving course but with several unique twists:

During the driving test, contestants will face a “challenging student passengers” scenario in which they’re graded on how effectively they handle students with disabilities as they “act out” on the school bus. Contestants are provided “BIOS of these students ahead of time (the student roles are realistically played by adult judges who are familiar with the characteristics of such children) so they know some background about them and their special needs.

At the same time, drivers are graded on the “TLC” driving skills – their ability to carefully maneuver a bus through turns and over bumps while transporting fragile passengers. TLC driving skills will be measured by a device located in the rear of the school bus. The device measures how much the rear of the bus sways and shakes as it stops and starts, turns, and goes over speed bumps.

For an entry form and detailed information about the 2003 Virginia Special Needs Team Safety School Bus Road-e-o contact:
Linwood Horne

Hanover County Public Schools
Transportation Office
11375 North Lakeridge Parkway
Ashland, VA 23005
(804) 365-6522
lhorne@hcps3.hanover.k12.va.us

Meet Michael Ashby, VAPT Director



Michael moved to Virginia in 1977 from his hometown of Chicopee Massachusetts. He has been married to his wife, Susan, for 25 years and has two children. Michael started his teaching career in 1977 with King William County Schools. In 1989 he left teaching and began a new career in school administration working at all three levels. He was put in charge of Transportation among other things in 1996. Up until now, all of his experience is in King William County Schools.

MITZI CRUISE, Hanover County, shares the following information with us:



The Shell Oil Company recently issued a warning after three incidents in which mobile (cell phones) ignited fumes during fueling operations. In the first case, the phone was placed on the car's trunk lid during fueling; it rang and the ensuing fire destroyed the car and the gasoline pump. In the second, an individual suffered severe burns to their face when fumes ignited as they answered a call while refueling their car. And in the third, an individual suffered burns to the thigh and groin as fumes ignited when the phone, which was in their pocket, rang while they were fueling their car.

You should know that:

- Mobile phones can ignite fuel or fumes. Mobile phones that light up when switched on or when they ring release enough energy to provide a spark for ignition. Mobil phones should not be used in filling stations, or when fueling lawn mowers, boats, etc.
- Mobil phones should not be used, or should be turned off, around other materials that generate flammable or explosive fumes or dust, i.e., solvents, chemicals, gases, grain dust, etc.

Virginia School Bus History



Follow-up Information Regarding Article on Cell phone use at Fueling Stations on Page 7.....

In light of the comments about the recent article in the VAPT newsletter regarding cell phones at fueling stations, the following is offered:

Shell Oil Company denies that the email in question originated from Shell Malaysia. Further, Shell cannot confirm that any of the three reported incidents ever happened. However, limited research over the last several days, indicates that while it is very remote that cell phone use (as well as cameras and pagers) can generate a source for ignition, there is a very low risk. Therefore, both oil companies and cellular phone companies have chosen to alert consumers.

Nextel cell phones state in their users manual - safety section that " DANGER- DO NOT USE CELL PHONES WHILE FUELING".

Several good web sites are listed if you want to research it on your own. Once again, as an advisory to school bus drivers: use good judgment about cell phone use when fueling - the same as for other precautions taken, such as smoking, turning off ignition, or having students on the bus.

<http://www.snopes.com/autos/hazards/gasvapor.asp>

http://www.shell.com/home/Framework?siteId=my-en&FC1=&FC2=&FC4=&FC5=&FC3=/my-en/html/iwgen/news_and_library/hse/2002/mobilephones_011611415.html